

FACTSHEET

Wildlife Services

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

April 1999

The Wildlife Services Decision Model

The Wildlife Services (WS) program responds to requests by the public, local and State governments, Tribes, and other Federal agencies in need of assistance dealing with wildlife damage. A Federal service program that shares costs with cooperators, WS is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

WS has the authority to assist in solving problems that are created when wildlife cause damage to agriculture, property, or natural resources. WS also assists with wildlife problems involving threats to human health and safety and threatened or endangered species.

WS professionals provide biologically sound, effective, and accountable solutions to wildlife problems. In all instances, WS programs are conducted to ensure no lasting negative impact on wildlife populations. WS professionals strive to educate the public about the importance of using responsible strategies for living with wildlife.

When making decisions to resolve human-wildlife conflicts, WS takes into consideration a variety of factors. WS employees consider protected or threatened and endangered species, environmental impacts, the effectiveness of management techniques, and social and legal concerns when formulating management strategies. WS also considers the well-being of the public and wildlife at all times.

Management strategies may include the application of one or more techniques, with priority given to nonlethal methods when effective and practicable.

To ensure that every appropriate factor is considered when formulating a solution to a wildlife damage problem, WS uses a decision model. This systematic approach is outlined in a WS program directive that provides guidance to all employees. WS' decision model is explained on the back of this factsheet.

Additional Information

For more information about this and other WS programs, or to find out how to request assistance from your WS State office, contact the WS Operational Support Staff at (301) 734-7921 or write to:

USDA, APHIS, WS
4700 River Road
Unit 87
Riverdale, MD 20737

You can also find information on WS programs on their Website (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ws>).

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The Decision Model

Receive Request for Assistance. Wildlife damage management services are provided only in response to requests for assistance.

Assess Problem. A determination will be made as to whether the problem is within the authority of WS. Damage information will be gathered and analyzed to determine factors such as what species was responsible for the damage; the type, extent, and magnitude of damage; the current economic loss and potential losses; the local history of damage; and what management methods, if any, were used to reduce past damage and the results of those actions.

Evaluate Management Methods. Once a problem assessment is completed, an evaluation of management methods will be conducted. Methods will be evaluated in the context of their legal and administrative availability and their acceptability based on biological, environmental, social, and cultural factors.

Formulate Management Strategy. Methods determined to be practical for use are formulated into a management strategy. The concept of integrated wildlife damage management should be applied when formulating each management strategy. This approach encourages the use of several management techniques rather than relying on a single method. Consideration of factors such as available expertise, legal constraints on methods used, costs, and effectiveness is essential in formulating each management strategy.

Provide Assistance. Program service can be provided by two basic means: technical assistance and direct control.

Monitor and Evaluate Results of Control Actions. When direct control is provided, it is necessary to monitor the results. Monitoring and evaluating the actions is important for determining whether further assistance is required or whether the problem has been resolved.

End of Project. With technical assistance, the projects normally end after recommendations or advice are provided to the requestor. An operational project normally ends when WS personnel have stopped or reduced the damage to an acceptable level. Problems such as chronic predation on livestock or at aquaculture facilities may require continuing or intermittent attention and may have no well-defined end point.

